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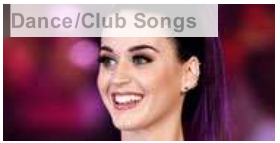
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Charlie McCoy Honors Hank Williams on 'Lonesome Whistle'

by Chuck Dauphin, Nashville | July 26, 2012 12:10 EDT

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Hank Williams



Charlie McCoy

Charlie McCoy remembers getting the call some three years ago that he would be one of three new inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame. It's an honor that he still can't believe at times, even today.

"It's amazing," says McCoy. "Some days I wake up, and go to the wall, and make sure that the plaque is still there. Sometimes it still feels like a dream." It was especially meaningful to the multi-talented instrumentalist / singer to go into the Hall alongside of two other artists he has known well - Roy Clark and Barbara Mandrell... "because Roy and I had such a history together with eighteen years on 'Hee Haw,' and I played on most of Barbara's hit records."

It was another Hall of Famer that was on McCoy's mind when he talked with Billboard recently. He has just released a new album, "Lonesome Whistle: A Tribute To Hank Williams." He said he has always felt a connection to both the music and the legend himself.



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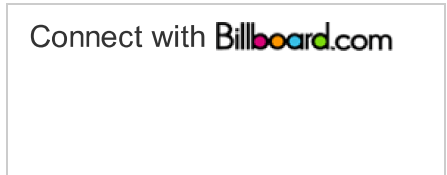
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"Number one, I do believe he's the greatest country writer that has ever lived. When you consider that he only lived to be twenty-nine years old, and didn't have a high school education, and the fact that the music he wrote fifty years ago is still as popular as it ever was - and it will be forever. Also, I was born in Oak Hill, VA, and the owners of the funeral home that took care of the body were friends of my mother. So, it's a strange connection, but I've wanted to do this record for some time."

McCoy received a special helping hand from the Williams family on the project. "Jett, his daughter, and I have toured together, and I mentioned this to her when we were playing in Japan. She said 'Whenever you get ready to do this, count me in. I want to be a part of it.' I thought that was very cool. She contributed not only her vocals, but gave me a track of one of his radio shows, and we put our voices on top of Hank singing "I Saw The Light." McCoy said that was quite a powerful moment. "I looked over at her in the studio, and she had a tear coming down. It was so emotional for her to sing with her father. She and her husband were such a great help on this project." The album also features appearances from Clark and Ricky Skaggs.

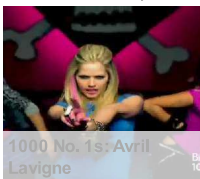
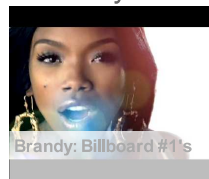
McCoy, who first picked up a harmonica in 1949, has played just about every instrument imaginable during his years in the studio, which has included sessions with Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan and Ween. Was there ever an instance of knowing he was getting a sneak preview of a classic? "I had that feeling several times in the studio - when you were playing on a record, and you just knew. 'He Stopped Loving Her Today' by George Jones and 'Pretty Woman' by Roy Orbison. When they started running that song down, we all started looking at each other and knew we were onto something big."

McCoy, who is still very much in-demand, says the music is still fun, though life in the studio is a lot different. "The sad thing to me is if I get a call for a mainstream session, I never see another musician. To me, the joy was all the musicians in one room with the artists and the background singers making a record. We didn't have the technology to do it any other way. Nobody wanted to be the one who made everyone have to do it again. Today, you can fix anything. Sometimes, I think when it comes to technology, the further ahead we go, the further behind we get."



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